

Title: Beyond Subject and Object: The Transliminal Being, Meaning-Density, and the Primacy of Engagement

Abstract:

This article challenges the subject-object dichotomy that pervades traditional phenomenology and proposes a novel framework centered on the "transliminal being." Drawing on insights from Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Merleau-Ponty, and engaging with contemporary debates in phenomenology (e.g., Zahavi, Gallagher, Loidolt, Thompson) and cognitive science (e.g., 4E cognition, Noë), it argues that "engagement" is ontologically primary, preceding and making possible the distinction between subject and object. Through a refined phenomenological-genealogical method, the article analyzes how the transliminal being's "elastic ekstastic multidimensionality" and the "Aging Matrix" structure experience, particularly through the phenomenon of anxiety. **Central to this framework is the concept of "meaning-density," which explains how different patterns of engagement, characterized by varying concentrations and richness of meaning, generate our experience of temporality.** The article explores the implications of this framework for understanding temporality, ethics, aesthetics, and the nature of being, arguing that this approach offers a more nuanced understanding of human existence as fundamentally, and primordially, engaged. The article particularly focuses on how this framework provides a richer and more dynamic understanding of temporality than traditional accounts.

• Key Contributions:

- o **Novel Integration:** This article uniquely integrates phenomenology and genealogy to move beyond the subject-object paradigm, offering a more dynamic and historically grounded understanding of experience. It demonstrates how genealogical forces shape the very structure of lived experience, thus bridging the gap between these two often-separated traditions.
- o **Revision of Genealogical Tradition:** It revises the genealogical tradition by grounding it in lived experience, showing how historical forces, particularly those related to power and knowledge, shape the very structure of engagement and the emergence of meaning. This provides a more concrete and phenomenologically grounded approach to genealogical analysis and addresses critiques that genealogy can sometimes be overly abstract or detached from lived reality.
- o **New Framework for Existential Theory:** It opens new doors for existential theory by highlighting the primacy of engagement and introducing the concept of the transliminal being, which challenges traditional notions of selfhood and agency. It

provides a new framework for understanding authenticity, freedom, and responsibility as emerging from patterns of engagement.

- o **Rethinking Temporality:** It introduces "meaning-density" and the "Aging Matrix" as fundamental temporal structures, challenging traditional notions of time and offering a new perspective on finitude, value, and desire. It provides a nuanced understanding of how temporality is not merely a linear progression but is structured by our orientation towards an indefinitely definite end, and how this structure shapes our experience of value and meaning. The article argues that meaning-density is the "engine" of temporal experience, providing a dynamic mechanism for understanding how time is lived.
- o **Methodological Innovation:** It develops a refined phenomenological-genealogical method for investigating the structures of engagement and meaning-density, providing concrete tools for analyzing lived experience. This method combines the strengths of both phenomenological and genealogical approaches, allowing for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of human existence.

Introduction:

Contemporary phenomenology faces a fundamental challenge in articulating how human experience is structured temporally. While phenomenological analysis, particularly in the work of Husserl (1913/1983) and Heidegger (1927/1962), has revealed crucial insights about temporality, I argue that existing approaches remain constrained by implicit assumptions about *what* experiences and *what* does the experiencing. These assumptions manifest even in Heidegger's revolutionary analysis of Dasein, which, despite moving beyond the subject-object dichotomy in many ways, still retains traces of substantialist thinking in its treatment of human existence, particularly in its emphasis on being-toward-death as the primary temporal horizon (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 279-311). While Heidegger's analysis of temporality is groundbreaking, it prioritizes the future as the primary dimension of temporalization, potentially overlooking the way in which the past and present are co-constituted through engagement, and how this co-constitution is shaped by historical forces. This potential limitation will be addressed through the introduction of the Aging Matrix and the concept of meaning-density, which provide a broader framework for understanding temporality and how it is lived.

Similarly, while genealogical methods developed by Nietzsche (1887/1998) and Foucault (1975/1995, 1976/1990) illuminate how meanings and practices emerge historically, they have not fully explored how these

historical processes structure immediate *lived* experience. The genealogical insight that there is no "doer behind the deed," as Nietzsche argues in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche, 1887/1998, Essay I, Section 13), needs to be integrated with a phenomenological analysis of how experience actually manifests prior to any conceptual imposition of a doer. This integration requires a method that can both attend to the immediacy of lived experience and trace the historical forces that have shaped it.

This article develops a novel framework for understanding human existence through what I term the "**transliminal being.**" **The transliminal being is not a thing, a substance, or a subject, but rather the dynamic field of engagement itself, characterized by its capacity for elastic ekstastic multidimensionality.** It is a field of potentiality from which both subject and object emerge. Rather than starting with a subject who then experiences or acts, I argue that *engagement itself is ontologically primary*. Through careful phenomenological-genealogical analysis, I show how what we typically think of as a subject experiencing objects emerges from more fundamental structures of involvement that precede any subject-object distinction. This approach builds upon, yet significantly differs from, Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "body-subject" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012) by emphasizing the primacy of engagement *prior* to the constitution of any embodied subject, and it diverges from enactivist frameworks (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Gallagher, 2017) by grounding the analysis in a detailed phenomenological and genealogical investigation of lived experience, and by introducing the concept of the Aging Matrix as a fundamental temporal structure. While enactivism, particularly in the work of Gallagher (2017) and Thompson (2007), emphasizes the dynamic interplay between organism and environment, our framework further specifies how this interplay is structured by meaning-density and the transliminal being's inherent temporal orientation. It also addresses some of the limitations of enactivism by providing a more robust account of the historical and cultural dimensions of experience, drawing on the insights of genealogical analysis. Our approach moves beyond the organism-environment dyad to explore the broader field of engagement within which both organism and environment are constituted.

The key to this analysis lies in understanding what Husserl identified in *Ideas I* as the natural attitude's implicit "thesis" - our everyday assumption that we are subjects experiencing an objective world (Husserl, 1913/1983, pp. 51-62). But where Husserl sought to bracket this assumption through the *epoché* to reveal pure consciousness, I argue we need to examine how this very assumption *arises* from more basic structures of engagement. **This requires a modified phenomenological reduction that, instead of bracketing the natural attitude, suspends the assumption of a pre-existing subject-object split to investigate how this very distinction emerges from within the field of engagement itself.** This is not a

rejection of the natural attitude but an inquiry into its conditions of possibility. These structures manifest what I call "**elastic ekstatic multidimensionality**" - a unified way of existing that becomes artificially divided into "mental" and "physical" aspects only upon reflection.

Consider artistic creation. When a painter is deeply absorbed in their work, there isn't first a subject who then applies paint to canvas. Rather, there is an engaged unity of *painter-painting-painted* that only later, upon reflection, gets divided into separate components. The feeling of the brush in hand, the visual perception of the colors mixing, the emotional investment in the image emerging - these are not separate experiences unified by a pre-existing subject, but aspects of a single, dynamic field of engagement. The painter exists *as* this engagement, *becoming-with-in-and-as* the emerging artwork. This isn't merely a psychological state of absorption, as described by Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of "flow," but reveals something fundamental about human existence - that engagement precedes and makes possible both subject and object. It is in the midst of this engaged activity that the distinctions between painter, painting, and painted begin to emerge, not as pre-existing entities but as products of the engagement itself.

This insight connects with Nietzsche's genealogical critique in *On the Genealogy of Morality* of how we project a "doer" behind every deed. Nietzsche shows how our assumption that there must be a substantial subject performing actions has a specific historical emergence, tied to the development of moral concepts like responsibility and guilt (Nietzsche, 1887/1998, Essay II). He argues that the "subject" is a fiction imposed on the flux of becoming to make it calculable and predictable, a product of specific power dynamics rather than an ontological truth. Building on this, Foucault's analyses in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* reveal how power relations, operating through disciplinary practices and discourses, shape the very way we understand ourselves as subjects (Foucault, 1975/1995; 1976/1990). For instance, Foucault demonstrates how modern institutions like prisons and hospitals produce "docile bodies" through specific techniques of observation, normalization, and examination (Foucault, 1975/1995, pp. 135-194), shaping not only our behavior but our very sense of self. My analysis extends these insights by showing how the subject-object distinction emerges from more fundamental structures of engagement that are themselves subject to historical and genealogical forces. I aim to show that engagement is not merely a neutral medium through which subjects and objects interact, but the very field in which these distinctions become possible and meaningful, and that this field is itself shaped by historical and cultural forces.

This article will proceed by first, explicating the concept of the transliminal being and its elastic ekstatic multidimensionality.

Second, it will introduce the concept of meaning-density and show how it shapes our experience of temporality within the Aging Matrix. Third, it will demonstrate the application of the phenomenological-genealogical method through an analysis of anxiety as a revelatory phenomenon. Fourth, it will extend the analysis to other domains of experience, such as learning, loving, and creating. Fifth, it will discuss the implications of this framework for contemporary debates in phenomenology, psychology, cognitive science, and existential studies. Sixth, it will address potential objections to the framework. Finally, it will conclude by summarizing the key contributions of the article and outlining directions for future research.

Section 1: The Transliminal Being and Fundamental Engagement

To understand the transliminal being, we must first examine how traditional approaches to human existence have been shaped by what Husserl calls the "natural attitude." In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl shows how our everyday understanding implicitly assumes a distinction between experiencing subject and experienced world (Husserl, 1950/1991, pp. 6-18). Even sophisticated philosophical attempts to overcome this distinction, such as analytic philosophy of mind or materialist accounts of behavior, often retain traces of it by starting with either the subject side (consciousness, mind) or object side (materialism, behaviorism) of the divide.

The transliminal being represents a fundamentally different starting point. Rather than beginning with either subject or object, we begin with *engagement itself*. This isn't simply a methodological choice but reflects the actual structure of experience. When we carefully attend to how experience manifests - what Husserl, in *Ideas I*, calls the phenomenological reduction - we find that engagement is more fundamental than either the engager or the engaged (Husserl, 1913/1983, pp. 57-65). This approach differs from Husserl's in that it does not seek to bracket the natural attitude to access pure consciousness, but rather to understand how the natural attitude itself emerges from a more primordial field of engagement. **Our phenomenological reduction, therefore, involves suspending the assumption of a pre-existing subject-object split and attending to the dynamic field of engagement itself. It involves asking not "What is the nature of the subject?" or "What is the nature of the object?" but "How does the subject-object distinction itself emerge from within the field of engagement?"** It aims to uncover the historical and experiential genesis of the subject-object distinction, as well as the underlying structures that make it possible.

Consider how this manifests in concrete experience. When we are deeply absorbed in reading a novel, there isn't first a reader who *then* engages with the text. Rather, there is a unified field of engagement that includes

what we later abstract as "mental" elements (understanding, imagination, emotional response) and "physical" elements (eye movements, posture, breathing). The feeling of suspense, the mental image of a character, the physical act of turning the page - these are not separate events occurring in a pre-existing subject and object, but are aspects of a single, dynamic field of engagement. These aren't separate components that need to be unified but different aspects of an *already unified engagement*. This unity is prior to any distinction between a perceiving subject and a perceived object, a distinction that arises only upon reflection, as Zahavi's work on minimal selfhood also suggests, though he focuses on pre-reflective self-awareness within consciousness (Zahavi, 2005). Our approach goes further by arguing that even this minimal selfhood is a product of more fundamental engagement, and by examining how this engagement is historically and culturally shaped. We are suggesting that the "minimal self" is already a product of the way in which engagement has unfolded.

This connects directly to Nietzsche's insight in *The Gay Science* that "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; the 'doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing" (Nietzsche, 1882/2001, Section 355). But where Nietzsche applies this primarily to action and morality, I argue it reveals something fundamental about *existence itself*. The transliminal being isn't *something* that engages but *is* the engagement itself - the capacity for involvement that makes meaningful experience possible. This capacity is not a property of a pre-existing entity but the very ground of being. It is the field of potentiality from which both subjects and objects emerge.

This fundamentality of engagement manifests in three interrelated characteristics that I term "**elastic ekstatic multidimensionality**":

1. Elasticity:

- **Definition:** The capacity to stretch across different modes of involvement while maintaining coherent identity. This isn't the flexibility of a pre-existing subject, as in psychological notions of adaptability, but describes how identity emerges *through* sustained engagement, much like a melody maintains its identity across variations in tempo or key. It is the capacity to be involved in multiple things at once without fragmenting into parts, to be simultaneously present in different fields of meaning without losing oneself. It is the dynamic capacity to extend into different experiences while maintaining a sense of continuity.
- **Distinction from Existing Concepts:** This differs fundamentally from concepts of flexibility or adaptability as they are usually understood. Elasticity, as used here, is not a property that a subject *possesses* but a characteristic of how engagement itself unfolds. It is not about a subject changing its properties but about how a coherent

pattern of engagement can encompass diverse modes of involvement. It is also distinct from Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body-subject in *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). While Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the body's role in our experience of the world, he still retains a notion of a subject, albeit an embodied one. Elasticity, in contrast, suggests that the very notion of a subject emerges from the more fundamental phenomenon of engagement, an engagement that is not limited to bodily experience but encompasses all forms of involvement. Merleau-Ponty's "body-subject" is still a *kind* of subject; our "elasticity" describes a characteristic of engagement *prior* to any subject-object distinction.

- **Textual Grounding:** This concept critiques the substantialist view of the self found in much of Western philosophy, from Descartes' "thinking thing" to Kant's transcendental subject. It also challenges the notion of a fixed identity that underlies much of contemporary psychology. It draws inspiration from Nietzsche's critique of the subject in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche, 1887/1998) and *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche, 1882/2001), as well as from process philosophy's emphasis on becoming over being (Whitehead, 1929). It also resonates with contemporary work on embodied cognition, which emphasizes the dynamic and flexible nature of cognitive processes.

2. Ekstaticity:

- **Definition:** Building on but transforming Heidegger's concept of temporal *ekstasis* (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 374-380), this describes how the transliminal being always exists *beyond itself* - not just temporally but in multiple dimensions of meaning simultaneously. This "beyond itself" is not a spatial location but the very structure of engaged existence, akin to how a musical chord is always "beyond" each individual note yet constituted by them. It is the capacity to be simultaneously present in multiple fields of meaning without losing oneself in any one of them, to be always more than any particular manifestation. It is the inherent openness and transcendence that characterizes engaged existence.
- ***Distinction from Existing Concepts:** This extends Heidegger's notion of *ekstasis* beyond the purely temporal realm. While Heidegger focuses on how Dasein is "outside of itself" in its temporal projection towards the future, particularly in its being-toward-death, ekstaticity here refers to a more general structure of being "outside of oneself" in multiple dimensions of meaning simultaneously. It is not just about being ahead of oneself in time but about being involved in multiple contexts, relationships, and projects at once. It differs from both Heidegger's and Sartre's existentialism by grounding this "being outside oneself" in concrete, historically shaped patterns of

engagement rather than in abstract notions of freedom or nothingness. It also differs from Sartre's notion of "being-for-itself" (Sartre, 1943/1956) in that it does not imply a lack or a nothingness at the heart of consciousness but rather a positive capacity for multi-dimensional engagement. While Sartre emphasizes the negativity and lack within consciousness, ekstasiticity highlights the positive capacity of engagement to extend into multiple fields of meaning.

- **Textual Grounding:** This concept draws on Heidegger's analysis of *ekstasis* in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 374-380) but also critiques its limitations. While Heidegger's analysis is groundbreaking in showing how temporality is constitutive of Dasein's being, it tends to prioritize the future dimension and the individual's being-toward-death. Ekstasiticity, as developed here, broadens this to include the simultaneous involvement in multiple fields of meaning, emphasizing the relational and contextual aspects of existence. It also draws on Levinas' notion of the "otherwise than being" (Levinas, 1974/1981) to emphasize the ethical dimension of this being "outside oneself," as well as on recent work by Loidolt (2011) on the ethical implications of Heideggerian temporality.

3. Multidimensionality:

- **Definition:** The way engagement opens multiple interconnected fields of meaning that aren't reducible to physical, mental, or temporal categories. When deeply engaged in reading, for instance, we are simultaneously involved in the physical act of holding the book, the imaginative world of the narrative, the emotional resonance of the story, and the broader context of our own lives. These dimensions aren't separate layers, as in a layered model of the self, but are interpenetrating aspects of a single, unified engagement. They are mutually constitutive, each shaping and being shaped by the others. Each dimension provides a different "texture" to the engagement, and they all blend together to create the richness of lived experience.
- **Distinction from Existing Concepts:** This concept goes beyond mere multiplicity or multi-tasking. It highlights how different dimensions of meaning are not simply co-present but are *interwoven* and *mutually constitutive* within the structure of engagement itself. It's not that we are doing many things at once, but that our being is fundamentally multi-dimensional in its engaged existence. This differs from simply having multiple roles or identities, as it emphasizes the dynamic and fluid interplay between these dimensions within a unified field of engagement. It is also distinct from the concept of "multiple perspectives" as it does not imply a subject who can switch between different viewpoints, but rather a field of engagement that is inherently multi-dimensional. It moves beyond enactivist notions of multiple "domains" of interaction (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, 1991) by

emphasizing how these domains are not merely co-existing but are *constituted* within the very structure of engagement. Furthermore, it contrasts with Gallagher's (2017) focus on intersubjectivity as primarily a bodily interaction by highlighting how the multiple dimensions of meaning are also shaped by historical and cultural forces. It's not just about bodily interaction, but about how shared meanings, shaped by history and culture, are woven into the fabric of engagement.

- **Textual Grounding:** This builds upon, but also moves beyond, the work of enactivist theorists like Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), who emphasize the interconnectedness of mind, body, and world. While enactivism highlights the dynamic interplay between organism and environment, multidimensionality emphasizes the multiple, interwoven fields of meaning that are constituted *within* engagement itself. It's not just about the interaction between organism and environment but about the multi-dimensional nature of the engagement that precedes and makes possible this interaction. It also draws inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "flesh of the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968), which suggests an ontological intertwining of the perceiver and the perceived, as well as from Gallagher's (2017) work on enactive intersubjectivity, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in shaping our experience of the world.

Interplay of Key Concepts:

Feature	Elasticity	Ekstaticity	Multidimensionality
Definition	Capacity to stretch across different modes of involvement while maintaining coherent identity.	Capacity to exist beyond oneself, not just temporally but in multiple dimensions of meaning simultaneously.	The way engagement opens multiple interconnected fields of meaning that aren't reducible to physical, mental, or temporal categories.
Focus	Sustained engagement and the emergence of identity.	Being simultaneously present in multiple fields of meaning.	Interwoven and mutually constitutive nature of different dimensions of meaning within engagement.
Distinction	Not flexibility of a pre-existing subject, but how identity emerges through engagement.	Extends Heidegger's temporal <i>ekstasis</i> to encompass multiple dimensions of meaning. Differs from Sartre's being-	Goes beyond multiplicity or multi-tasking. Highlights the interwoven and mutually constitutive nature of different dimensions of

Textual Grounding	Differs from Merleau-Ponty's body-subject.	for-itself.	meaning.
	Critiques substantialist views of self (Descartes, Kant). Builds on Nietzsche's critique of the subject and process philosophy (Whitehead).	Draws on and critiques Heidegger's <i>ekstasis</i> in <i>Being and Time</i> . Inspired by Levinas' "otherwise than being" and Loidolt's work on temporality.	Builds on and moves beyond enactivist theories (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, Gallagher) and Merleau-Ponty's "flesh of the world."

These characteristics aren't properties of a subject but describe how engagement itself structures experience. They are *mutually dependent*:

- **Elasticity requires ekstasticity** to have something to stretch toward. Without the capacity to be "outside" of oneself in different modes of involvement, there would be nothing to be elastic *in relation to*.
- **Ekstasticity requires elasticity** to maintain coherence while being "outside oneself." Without the capacity to stretch and maintain a coherent pattern of engagement, being "outside oneself" would lead to fragmentation rather than enriched experience.
- **Both require multidimensionality** to provide the fields of meaning within which to operate. Elasticity and ekstasticity need the multiple dimensions of meaning to be able to manifest as fundamental aspects of engagement.

When reading, for instance, we don't first have a physical engagement with the book and then add mental understanding. Rather, these dimensions emerge together from more fundamental unified engagement, each shaping and being shaped by the others. This dynamic interplay constitutes the very texture of lived experience. The reader is not simply *in* the story, but the story, the act of reading, and the reader's own life context all interpenetrate and co-constitute each other within the field of engagement. The reader is elastically stretched across these different modes of involvement, ekstastically existing beyond any single one, and participating in the multidimensionality of the reading experience. The physical act of holding the book, the mental act of interpreting the words, the emotional response to the narrative, and the connection to the reader's own life experiences all emerge together within this unified field of engagement.

Conceptual Interplay in Action:

To further clarify how these concepts work together, let's consider a specific example:

Scenario: A musician is practicing a difficult passage in a piece of music.

- **Elasticity:** The musician's engagement stretches across multiple modes: physical (playing the instrument), cognitive (interpreting the score), emotional (feeling the music), and even social (anticipating performance). They maintain a coherent identity as a musician throughout this diverse engagement. Their identity is not fixed but emerges dynamically through this sustained engagement.
- **Ekstaticity:** The musician is not simply "in" the present moment of playing. They are also "outside" themselves in their anticipation of upcoming notes, their memory of past performances, their awareness of the musical tradition they are participating in, and their connection to the broader meaning of the music. They are simultaneously present in the physical space of the practice room, the temporal space of the musical piece, and the broader cultural space of musical tradition.
- **Multidimensionality:** The musician's engagement unfolds across multiple, interwoven fields of meaning: the technical demands of the piece, the emotional expression it requires, the historical context of its composition, and the personal significance it holds for them. These dimensions are not separate but mutually constitutive. The technical challenges, for instance, are not merely physical obstacles but are imbued with musical meaning and emotional weight.

In this scenario, we can see how elasticity, ekstaticity, and multidimensionality are not separate properties but are intertwined aspects of a single, unified field of engagement. The musician's identity emerges through their elastic engagement with the music, an engagement that is inherently ekstatic and multidimensional. This example also shows how these characteristics are not limited to extraordinary experiences but are fundamental to our everyday activities.

Section 2: Rethinking Temporality Through Engagement, Meaning-Density, and the Aging Matrix

The understanding of the transliminal being as fundamental engagement requires us to radically rethink how we conceive of temporality. Traditionally, even in sophisticated phenomenological accounts, time tends to be understood as a structure *within which* experience occurs. Heidegger made significant progress in *Being and Time* by showing how Dasein's temporality isn't simply a container for experience but constitutes Dasein's very being (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 45-55). However, his analysis still treats temporality primarily through the lens of being-toward-death, which maintains subtle traces of linear thinking by prioritizing the future as the

primary dimension of temporalization and potentially overlooking the dynamic interplay between all three temporal dimensions, as well as the historical forces that shape our understanding of time.

When we recognize engagement as fundamental, we see that temporality emerges differently, and it does so through the way in which meaning gathers and concentrates within experience. This gathering of meaning is what I term "**meaning-density**."

Meaning-Density:

- **Definition:** Meaning-density refers to the concentration and richness of meaningful relations that gather within a particular field of engagement. It is not simply the *amount* of meaning present, but the way in which different meanings interrelate, intensify, and create a specific experiential texture. It's about how densely packed and richly interconnected the meanings are within a given experience. High meaning-density is characterized by a sense of intensity, depth, and significance, while low meaning-density is characterized by a sense of superficiality, routine, or even boredom.
- **Types of Meaning-Density:**
 - **Restrictive:** Meaning gathers around a limited set of possibilities, often creating a sense of urgency, pressure, or anxiety.
 - *Example:* Waiting in the RMV with a pressing need to renew one's license. The limited possibilities for action and the high stakes associated with the outcome create a dense concentration of meaning around this specific task, leading to an experience of time as slow and oppressive.
 - *Everyday Example:* Being stuck in traffic when late for an important meeting. The limited options for action (staying in traffic, finding an alternate route that may be no faster) coupled with the high stakes of being late create a restrictive density of meaning, making time feel like it's crawling.
 - **Abundant:** Meaning gathers through a multiplicity of rich and varied possibilities, often leading to experiences of flow, creativity, or aesthetic appreciation.
 - *Example:* Being absorbed in a captivating novel or creating a work of art. The richness and variety of meaningful connections create an expansive and engaging experience, often leading to a sense of timelessness or an altered flow of time.
 - *Everyday Example:* Having a deeply engaging conversation with a close friend where numerous topics are explored, memories are shared, and new insights

emerge. The abundance of meaningful connections creates a sense of time flying by.

- o **Crisis:** Meaning gathers around a pivotal moment of decision or transformation, where the stakes are high and the future feels radically uncertain.
 - *Example:* Facing a major life choice or navigating a personal crisis. The intensity of the situation and the weight of potential consequences create a dense concentration of meaning around the decision point, often leading to an experience of time as both pressing and frozen.
 - *Everyday Example:* Making a difficult decision about a relationship or career path. The weight of the decision and the uncertainty of the outcome create a crisis-like density of meaning, making time feel both urgent and paralyzing.
- o **Mastery:** Meaning gathers around the skilled performance of an activity, where past experiences, present actions, and future possibilities are seamlessly integrated.
 - *Example:* A musician performing a complex piece or an athlete executing a perfect play. The skillful integration of past learning, present action, and anticipated outcomes creates a unique density of meaning, often leading to an experience of flow and a sense of effortless action.
 - *Everyday Example:* Driving a familiar route, where the actions of steering, accelerating, and braking are performed automatically and seamlessly, allowing the driver to be simultaneously aware of their surroundings, engaged in conversation, or lost in thought.
- **Relationship to Temporality:** Meaning-density is not merely a subjective feeling but fundamentally shapes our experience of temporality. Different patterns of meaning-gathering create different temporal textures:
 - o **Slowed Time:** High meaning-density, whether restrictive or abundant, can create an experience of slowed or expanded time. This is because the intensity of engagement draws us more deeply into the present moment, making it feel more substantial and significant. The density of meaning makes the present moment feel "thicker" and more significant.
 - o **Accelerated Time:** Low meaning-density, or a rapid succession of superficial meaning-gatherings, can create an experience of accelerated or dissipated time. This is because the lack of depth and intensity in our engagement prevents us from fully inhabiting the present moment. We are not fully absorbed, and thus time seems to "fly by" without leaving a significant impression.

- o **Timelessness:** In moments of extreme meaning-density, particularly in experiences of flow or mystical states, time can seem to stand still or disappear altogether. This is because the richness and intensity of engagement completely absorbs our attention, transcending our ordinary experience of temporal succession. The density of meaning is so high that it overwhelms our usual temporal frameworks, creating an experience of timeless presence.

Consider again the experience of reading. Traditional accounts might describe this as a subject moving through successive moments of engagement with the text. But careful phenomenological attention reveals something more complex: the engagement itself creates its own temporal structure *through the gathering of meaning*. Past passages don't simply recede into memory but actively shape how current passages manifest their meaning. Future possibilities don't simply lie ahead but actively structure current understanding. This isn't just a psychological fact about reading but reveals something fundamental about how temporality emerges from *meaningful* engagement. The past isn't simply what *was* but a dimension of present engagement, and the future isn't simply what *will be* but a horizon that shapes how the present unfolds. This dynamic interplay between past, present, and future is constitutive of engaged experience, and it is within this interplay that meaning emerges and gathers in varying densities, shaping our experience of time.

This relates directly to what Husserl describes in *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* as the "living present" with its retention-protention structure (Husserl, 1928/1991). Husserl shows how the present moment isn't a discrete point but a dynamic field that includes retentions of the immediate past and protentions toward the immediate future. But where Husserl analyzes this primarily in terms of consciousness, our framework shows how this temporal structure emerges from more basic *engagement* and the gathering of *meaning*. The "past" and "future" aren't dimensions into which engagement extends but are constituted *through* the very structure of engagement itself, through the way meaning gathers and unfolds within the field of experience. They are not external to engagement but are its internal temporal horizons, horizons that are shaped by the density and richness of meaning.

This understanding leads us to what I term "**remnancy**" - the way past engagements persist not as mere memories of what was, as in a purely representational theory of memory, but as active structuring forces of current engagement, shaping the very way in which meaning can gather. **Remnancy** differs significantly from Husserlian **retention**. While retention is about the immediate "just-past" of consciousness, a trailing off of the present moment, **remnancy** refers to how *any* past engagement, regardless

of temporal proximity, can continue to shape present possibilities. It is a broader and deeper concept, encompassing not just the immediate past but the entire history of the transliminal being's engagements, a history that is sedimented within the structure of engagement itself and influences how meaning can gather and unfold.

Remnancy vs. Retention:

- **Remnancy:**

- **Definition:** The persistent and active influence of *all* past engagements on present experience, shaping the possibilities for future action and understanding. It's not simply a passive trace of the past, but an active force that structures the field of engagement, making certain actions and interpretations more likely than others. It shapes how meaning can gather and thus influences the very texture of our temporal experience.
- **Scope:** Encompasses the entire history of the transliminal being's engagements, including those from the distant past.
- **Function:** Actively shapes the present field of engagement by providing a "landscape" of possibilities. It's not just about remembering the past but about how the past continues to live and operate in the present, influencing the density and flow of meaning. It contributes to the "thickness" of the present moment by bringing the weight of past experiences to bear on current engagement.
- **Example:** A traumatic experience from childhood, even if not consciously remembered, can continue to shape an individual's patterns of engagement, making them more prone to anxiety or avoidance. This past experience creates a remnancy that alters how meaning gathers in the present, making threatening interpretations more readily available and influencing the individual's experience of time, perhaps making them feel "stuck" in the past.

- **Retention:**

- ***Definition:** The immediate "just-past" of consciousness, the trailing off of the present moment. It's the way in which the immediate past is still present in the present moment, providing a sense of continuity.
- **Scope:** Limited to the immediately preceding moments of experience.
- **Function:** Provides a sense of continuity and flow to conscious experience. It's about the immediate horizon of the past, not the entirety of one's history.
- **Example:** Hearing a melody, where each note is retained in consciousness as the next note is played, allowing us to perceive the melody as a continuous whole.

When we're anxious, for instance, past experiences don't simply influence current anxiety as remembered events. Rather, they constitute the very way anxiety manifests as a mode of engagement. This isn't merely psychological conditioning, as a behaviorist might explain it, but reveals how temporality emerges through engaged existence and how meaning gathers around threat and uncertainty. Past experiences of anxiety create a "sedimentation" of meaning, to borrow a term from Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, p. 153), that shapes how present situations can become meaningful. These past experiences, through remnancy, become part of the transliminal being's elastic ekstatic structure, influencing its multidimensional engagement with the world. They create a "landscape" of possibilities, making certain responses and interpretations more likely than others, and they alter the density of meaning, making anxious interpretations more readily available and influencing the individual's experience of time.

Sedimentation vs. Remnancy:

While both terms refer to the influence of the past on the present, they differ in their scope and emphasis.

- **Sedimentation (Merleau-Ponty):**
 - *Focus:* Primarily on the bodily sedimentation of habits and skills.
 - *Mechanism:* Emphasizes the way in which past experiences become incorporated into the body's repertoire of actions.
 - *Example:* Learning to ride a bicycle, where the movements gradually become sedimented in the body, allowing for smooth and automatic performance.
- **Remnancy (This Article):**
 - *Focus:* Broader than sedimentation, encompassing not only bodily habits but also emotional, cognitive, and existential patterns of engagement. It includes the sedimentation of meaning as well as bodily skills. It emphasizes the historical and cultural dimensions of experience, recognizing that our patterns of engagement are shaped by broader social forces.
 - *Mechanism:* Emphasizes the way in which past engagements actively structure the field of possibilities for present and future engagement, influencing how meaning can gather and unfold. It's not just about the residue of the past but about how the past actively shapes the present and future, making certain experiences and interpretations more likely. It highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of this process, recognizing that remnancy is not a fixed structure but is constantly being reshaped through ongoing engagement.
 - *Example:* A past experience of betrayal can create a remnancy that makes it difficult to trust others in the present, shaping the individual's entire field of social engagement and altering the

meaning-density of social interactions. This remnancy might manifest not only in bodily tension but also in cognitive biases, emotional responses, and a general sense of unease in social situations.

In essence, while sedimentation describes *how* past experiences become embodied, remnancy describes *what* happens to those experiences – they become active forces shaping present engagement and the very way in which meaning can gather and influence our experience of temporality. Remnancy is a more dynamic and active concept, highlighting the ongoing influence of the past in shaping the possibilities for being, and it emphasizes the role of meaning and interpretation in this process. It also brings a stronger temporal dimension to the concept of sedimentation, showing how the past is not simply a static deposit but continues to unfold and exert its influence within the dynamic structure of the Aging Matrix.

The Aging Matrix:

This understanding of temporality, intertwined with meaning-density and remnancy, leads us to a crucial concept for this framework: what I term "**The Aging Matrix**." This matrix isn't simply a framework we impose on time, nor is it merely a subjective experience of time's passage. Rather, it emerges from how the transliminal being structures temporality itself, and this structuring has a genealogical history, as suggested by Nietzsche's critique of linear time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1883-85/2005). It is important to note that while the Aging Matrix is a fundamental structure of human existence, the specific ways it is experienced and understood are shaped by historical and cultural forces. When we carefully attend to how phenomena present themselves in experience, we discover they consistently manifest through patterns of "fading," "passing," "eroding," or "decomposing." These aren't merely observations of objective change but reveal the fundamental way Being discloses itself through temporal structuring. This temporal structure is not culturally universal but has emerged historically, particularly through the development of linear conceptions of time in Western thought, as analyzed by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1966/2002). However, our focus here is not on the historical development of the concept of time, but on how the Aging Matrix structures lived experience and how meaning-density operates within this structure.

The key insight here concerns how we orient ourselves toward what I call the "**indefinitely definite end**." Death stands as an absolute certainty that nonetheless remains indefinite in its timing. This creates a unique temporal dynamic: phenomena present themselves not simply as present and then changing, but as *always already in the process of passing away*. The "already" here is crucial - it indicates how this temporal structure precedes

and makes possible our everyday understanding of change and impermanence. It's not that we first perceive something as present and then recognize that it will eventually fade, but rather that its very presence is constituted *through* its being situated within this matrix of passing-away. This "always already" points to the ontological priority of this temporal structure. The Aging Matrix is not something we add to our experience; it is the fundamental temporal framework within which all experience unfolds.

This temporal structuring manifests through *desire* as a fundamental existentielle. Traditional approaches often treat desire as a psychological state or an ontical phenomenon - something that occurs *within* time. Our analysis reveals desire as something more fundamental: it emerges from how the transliminal being structures temporality itself. The transliminal being, in its essential character of having-to-be-its-own-being (what Heidegger terms "jemeinigkeit" or mineness, though we are extending its meaning beyond Dasein's individuality to encompass the broader structure of engaged existence), experiences itself as aging precisely because it structures temporality around this indefinite end. This structure isn't merely a subjective feeling but a fundamental ontological condition that shapes how the world can be meaningful at all.

This gives rise to what I call "**reflexive impermanence**" - the way Being discloses itself through the temporal matrix of aging and desire.

Reflexive Impermanence:

- **Definition:** The way in which the awareness of impermanence is not simply an observation *about* the world but is constitutive of the very structure of existence. It is "reflexive" because this awareness loops back upon itself, shaping the very being of the transliminal being. It is a fundamental mode of self-disclosure of Being within the temporal framework of the Aging Matrix, a disclosure that is always already historically and culturally mediated.
- **Distinction from Heidegger's Being-Toward-Death:** While Heidegger emphasizes the importance of being-toward-death for understanding Dasein's existence, "reflexive impermanence" goes further by showing how the awareness of impermanence is not just a confrontation with one's own finitude but is constitutive of *all* experience within the Aging Matrix. It is not just about individual death but about the fundamental temporality of *all* beings, a temporality that is disclosed through the transliminal being's engagement with the world. Furthermore, reflexive impermanence highlights how this awareness is shaped by the specific ways in which meaning gathers within experience, as determined by the interplay of elasticity, ekstaticity, multidimensionality, and remnancy. It emphasizes that our awareness of finitude is not a separate cognitive

act but is woven into the very fabric of our engaged existence, and that this awareness is shaped by the density and richness of meaning in our lives. It is also distinct in that it is not solely focused on the individual's anticipation of their own death, but on the inherent transience of all phenomena as perceived through the lens of our engagement.

- **Textual Grounding:** This concept builds upon Heidegger's analysis of being-toward-death in *Being and Time* (1927/1962) but extends it in two ways. First, it emphasizes the "reflexive" nature of this awareness, showing how it shapes the very structure of existence, how it makes the anticipation of the end a constitutive part of the present moment. Second, it connects this awareness to the broader phenomenon of the Aging Matrix, showing how it is not just about individual death but about the fundamental temporality of all beings, a temporality that is revealed through the transliminal being's engaged experience. It also incorporates a genealogical perspective, acknowledging that the specific ways in which this awareness manifests are shaped by historical and cultural forces.

The term "reflexive" here indicates how this disclosure loops back upon itself: the transliminal being structures time through its orientation toward death, and this temporal structuring in turn shapes how Being itself becomes meaningful. "Impermanation" captures how this process operates through the constant awareness of passing-away, not as something added to experience but as constitutive of how phenomena present themselves at all. It is "reflexive" because the awareness of impermanence is itself a constitutive part of the structure of existence, shaping the very way beings can be encountered. This awareness is not a separate act of reflection but is woven into the very fabric of engaged existence, and it is through this awareness that meaning gathers and unfolds. It is through this reflexive awareness that the "indefinitely definite end" exerts its influence on the present, shaping our desires, values, and sense of meaning.

Meaning-Density and the Aging Matrix:

The concept of meaning-density is crucial for understanding how the Aging Matrix operates. The Aging Matrix is not simply an abstract temporal framework but is lived concretely through the ways in which meaning gathers and concentrates within our engagements. The "indefinitely definite end" is not just a distant event but shapes the very texture of our present experience by influencing how meaning gathers. The anticipation of the end infuses the present with a sense of urgency and significance, influencing the density and flow of meaning.

For example, the experience of watching a child grow up is structured by the Aging Matrix. We don't simply observe the child's development as a

series of objective changes. Rather, each stage of development is meaningful precisely because it is situated within the matrix of aging and passing-away. We see the child's first steps, their first words, their first day of school, all through the lens of this fundamental temporal structure. Each moment is imbued with a sense of both presence and transience, a sense of preciousness that arises from the awareness that it will not last. This awareness is not a separate thought but is woven into the very fabric of the experience, shaping how meaning gathers around these events. The meaning of these moments is intensified, made more "dense," by their situation within the Aging Matrix. The child's growth is not simply a biological process but a deeply meaningful event, made so by its location within the temporal horizon of the Aging Matrix.

The Aging Matrix, therefore, is not just about death but about how the awareness of finitude shapes the way meaning gathers in *all* our engagements. It is through this matrix that the transliminal being experiences the world as a field of meaning, a field in which some things stand out as particularly significant while others recede into the background. And it is through the concept of meaning-density that we can understand how this process of selection and intensification takes place, how certain moments and experiences become imbued with a particular temporal texture and a heightened sense of value. The Aging Matrix provides the temporal framework, while meaning-density provides the mechanism through which this framework is lived and experienced, and through which value and significance emerge. It is the interplay between the Aging Matrix and meaning-density that creates the unique temporal texture of human existence.

Implications of the Aging Matrix and Meaning-Density:

This concept of the Aging Matrix, with its inherent structure of reflexive impermanence and its dynamic interplay with meaning-density, has profound implications for how we understand not only temporality but also ethics, aesthetics, and the very nature of being.

- **Re Ethics:** The Aging Matrix transforms our understanding of ethical responsibility. If all beings exist within this matrix of passing-away, then our ethical obligations might be seen as rooted in this shared condition of impermanence. This suggests an ethics of care based on recognizing our mutual vulnerability and the preciousness of fleeting existence, similar to the Buddhist concept of *karuna* or compassion. It also raises questions about how we should relate to past and future generations, given that they too are situated within this same matrix. Our responsibility extends not only to those currently existing but also to those who have come before and those who will come after, all of whom are bound by the same temporal structure. This could lead to a

renewed emphasis on intergenerational justice, on our responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations, and on the importance of honoring and learning from the past. Furthermore, recognizing that ethical dilemmas arise within specific patterns of engagement, shaped by the Aging Matrix and meaning-density, suggests that ethical deliberation should focus on understanding and transforming these patterns rather than simply applying abstract principles. It involves recognizing how our choices and actions affect the flow of meaning, not just for ourselves but for others, and striving to create patterns of engagement that are conducive to flourishing within the context of our shared finitude. Ethical action, then, becomes a matter of cultivating a heightened sensitivity to the temporal dimension of our engagements and striving to create patterns of meaning-density that are conducive to well-being, both for ourselves and for others.

- **Aesthetics:** The Aging Matrix helps explain the power of art that deals with themes of transience, loss, and memory. Works of art that evoke the passing of time, the decay of beauty, or the fragility of life often resonate deeply with us because they tap into this fundamental structure of our existence. The Japanese concept of *mono no aware*, often translated as a "sensitivity to ephemera," can be seen as a cultural expression of this awareness of the Aging Matrix. Artworks that embody this sensitivity, such as the cherry blossom festivals in Japan or the vanitas paintings of the Dutch Golden Age, remind us of the beauty and poignancy of impermanence. They make the reflexive impermanence of the Aging Matrix explicit, allowing us to contemplate and come to terms with our own finitude. They also show us how meaning can gather with particular intensity around objects and events that are marked by their transience. Art, therefore, can be seen as a way of working with and through the Aging Matrix, a way of making meaning in the face of impermanence, and a way of exploring the different ways in which meaning-density can shape our experience of time and value. Art provides a space for exploring the emotional and existential dimensions of the Aging Matrix, allowing us to confront and process the anxieties and uncertainties that arise from our awareness of finitude. It can also help us to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the beauty and fragility of existence.
- **Metaphysics:** The Aging Matrix challenges traditional metaphysical notions of substance and permanence. If all beings are constituted through their existence within this matrix, then being itself is fundamentally temporal and characterized by impermanence. This suggests a metaphysics of process and becoming, rather than one of static being, aligning with the process philosophy of thinkers like Whitehead (1929). It also raises questions about the nature of reality itself, suggesting that reality is not a collection of enduring objects but a dynamic field of temporal becoming, a constantly unfolding

process of arising and passing away, a process in which meaning is constantly being created, transformed, and dissolved. This perspective challenges the traditional Western metaphysical emphasis on permanence and stability, offering instead a view of reality as inherently dynamic and ever-changing. It suggests that the search for ultimate foundations or unchanging principles may be misguided, and that we should instead focus on understanding the dynamic processes through which meaning and value emerge within the context of the Aging Matrix. This also implies that our understanding of being is always intertwined with our understanding of time, and that any attempt to grasp the nature of reality must take into account the fundamental temporality of existence. Being is not a static property but an ongoing process of becoming, a process that is shaped by the structure of the Aging Matrix and the dynamic interplay of meaning-density.

Section 8: Addressing Potential Objections

Before concluding, it is crucial to address some potential objections that might be raised against the framework presented here.

Objection 1: The Problem of Subjectivity:

One might argue that by emphasizing engagement over a pre-existing subject, we risk losing the subjective dimension of experience, leading to a kind of impersonal or objectivist account. This objection could be raised by proponents of "strong subjectivity" who believe that a robust notion of the subject is necessary to account for consciousness, agency, and moral responsibility. They might argue that without a subject, experience becomes meaningless and agency impossible. How can there be engagement without a subject who engages?

Response:

This objection misunderstands the nature of the transliminal being. While we argue that engagement is ontologically primary, this doesn't negate the reality of subjective experience. Rather, it recontextualizes it. Subjectivity, in our view, is not a pre-existing entity but an *emergent property* of patterns of engagement. The feeling of being a subject, of having a unique perspective on the world, arises *from* the specific ways in which we are engaged. This is consistent with the phenomenological notion of intentionality, where consciousness is always consciousness *of* something, but it goes further by showing how consciousness itself is a product of a more fundamental engagement, an engagement that is always already temporally and historically situated. Our framework allows for a nuanced understanding of subjectivity as both an emergent property of engagement

and a crucial aspect of how meaning-density is experienced and shaped. The subjective dimension is not eliminated but is understood as a product of the dynamic field of engagement.

Furthermore, the concept of "being-with-in-and-as" allows for a rich understanding of intersubjectivity. Our engagements are not isolated but are always intertwined with the engagements of others. We become who we are through our relationships and interactions, and these relationships are themselves patterns of engagement. This provides a basis for understanding empathy, communication, and sociality without relying on a pre-existing notion of the subject. The "with-in" aspect of "being-with-in-and-as" highlights the inherently social and relational nature of our existence. We are always already with others, and our sense of self emerges through these relationships. This intersubjective dimension is not secondary to our individual subjectivity but is constitutive of it. Our engagements are always co-constituted with the engagements of others.

Objection 2: The Charge of Relativism:

Another potential objection is that by emphasizing the historical and cultural shaping of engagement, we risk falling into relativism. If all experience is structured by historically contingent patterns of engagement, then how can we make any claims to truth or objectivity? This objection might be raised by those who believe that truth and objectivity require a foundation that transcends historical and cultural differences.

Response:

This objection assumes a dichotomy between historical contingency and objective truth that our framework challenges. While we acknowledge that patterns of engagement are shaped by historical and cultural forces, this doesn't mean that they are arbitrary or subjective. Rather, these patterns are the very conditions of possibility for anything to be meaningful at all, including the concepts of truth and objectivity. The fact that our understanding of truth and objectivity has a history does not mean that these concepts are meaningless or that all claims are equally valid.

Moreover, the concept of the Aging Matrix suggests a fundamental structure that underlies all historical and cultural variations. While the specific ways in which this matrix is experienced and articulated may differ across cultures, the basic structure of being oriented towards an "indefinitely definite end" remains constant. This provides a basis for cross-cultural understanding and communication, even while acknowledging the diversity of human experience. It allows us to recognize that different cultures may have different ways of understanding and coping with

impermanence, but that the underlying experience of finitude is a shared human condition.

Furthermore, our emphasis on engagement suggests a pragmatic criterion for evaluating different patterns of engagement. Those patterns that allow for more effective and fulfilling engagement with the world can be considered more "true" or "objective," not in the sense of corresponding to an independent reality, but in the sense of enabling more successful navigation of the world, a world that is always already temporally structured. This aligns with the pragmatist notion of truth as "what works," but grounds it in a deeper understanding of the ontological primacy of engagement and the shared structure of the Aging Matrix. It suggests that truth is not a static property of propositions but a dynamic process of engagement that is constantly being tested and refined through our interactions with the world and with others. Truth, then, is not about correspondence to a pre-existing reality but about the effectiveness and fruitfulness of our patterns of engagement in enabling us to live meaningful lives within the Aging Matrix. It is about finding patterns of engagement that allow for a rich and meaningful experience of the world, even in the face of impermanence and finitude.

Objection 3: The Status of the "Aging Matrix":

A further objection might be raised regarding the status of the Aging Matrix itself. Is it a universal structure of human existence, or is it also historically and culturally contingent? This objection might come from those who are wary of any claims about universal structures, particularly in light of post-structuralist critiques of essentialism.

sponse:

While we argue that the Aging Matrix, with its orientation towards an indefinitely definite end, is a fundamental structure of human existence, we also acknowledge that the specific *ways* in which this matrix is experienced and articulated can vary across different historical and cultural contexts. For example, the specific emotions associated with aging and death, the rituals surrounding death and dying, and the cultural narratives about the afterlife can all differ significantly. The meaning of death itself can vary across cultures, from something to be feared and avoided to something to be accepted and even embraced.

However, we maintain that the basic structure of being oriented towards an end that is both certain and uncertain is a fundamental aspect of human existence. This structure is not simply a cultural construction but is rooted in our biological and existential finitude. It is a condition of possibility for the emergence of meaning, value, and desire. It is the ontological ground of

our being-in-the-world, a ground that is shared by all humans, regardless of their cultural or historical background.

Furthermore, our genealogical approach allows us to investigate how the Aging Matrix itself has been shaped and transformed through history. For example, the rise of modern science and technology, with its emphasis on controlling and manipulating nature, might have altered our relationship to the Aging Matrix, perhaps leading to a denial or repression of our awareness of impermanence. This is a question that can be explored through further genealogical investigation, drawing on the tools developed by Nietzsche and Foucault. By tracing the historical development of our concepts of time, death, and the self, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the Aging Matrix has been shaped and reshaped over time, and how different cultural contexts have developed different ways of engaging with this fundamental structure. This historical shaping does not negate the fundamental nature of the Aging Matrix but adds another layer of complexity to our understanding of its operation, showing how it is both a universal structure and a historically contingent phenomenon.

Objection 4: The Absence of the "Ethical" in the Primacy of Engagement

Some might argue that by focusing on engagement as the primary ontological structure, the ethical dimension of human existence is sidelined or under-theorized. Critics invested in traditional ethical frameworks might worry that without a pre-existing subject, there is no ground for moral responsibility or ethical deliberation.

Response:

This critique misunderstands how the ethical emerges within the framework of the transliminal being. Rather than being sidelined, the ethical is reconceived as *intrinsic* to the structure of engagement itself. "Being-with-in-and-as" inherently involves a relationship with others, a relationship that is always already ethically charged.

- **Ethical Implications of "Being-with-in-and-as":** The "with-in" aspect of the transliminal being's mode of existence implies that we are never isolated monads, but always already in relation with others. This relationality is not a secondary add-on but is constitutive of our very being. We emerge as who we are through our engagements with others, and these engagements are always ethically significant. Our very sense of self is intertwined with the existence of others, and our actions inevitably affect them. This inherent relationality provides a foundation for ethical concern that does not depend on a pre-existing subject but emerges from the structure of engagement itself. The

ethical dimension is thus woven into the very fabric of our engaged existence.

- **Remnancy and Responsibility:** The concept of remnancy further underscores the ethical dimension. Our past engagements, including our interactions with others, leave traces that shape our present possibilities. We are, in a sense, responsible for the "sedimentation" of our past engagements, and this responsibility extends to how our actions will shape the future engagements of ourselves and others. This means that we are not only responsible for our present actions but also for the legacy of our past actions and for the kind of future we are creating through our engagements. The ethical implications of remnancy suggest that our choices have long-lasting consequences, shaping not only our own being but also the being of others with whom we are intertwined. Our past actions create a "moral landscape" that influences our present choices and future possibilities, a landscape that we are responsible for cultivating.
- **The Aging Matrix and Ethical Concern:** The Aging Matrix, with its inherent awareness of finitude and impermanence, also has ethical implications. Recognizing that all beings exist within this matrix of passing-away can foster a sense of shared vulnerability and interconnectedness, leading to an ethics of care and compassion. It reminds us that our actions have consequences, not just for ourselves but for others who share this same finite existence. This shared finitude can serve as a basis for ethical concern, motivating us to treat others with kindness and respect, knowing that we are all subject to the same fundamental temporal structure. The "need to get done with" can be channeled into ethical action, motivating us to make the most of our limited time and to contribute to the well-being of others. The Aging Matrix, therefore, provides a temporal horizon within which ethical considerations become paramount.

Thus, the ethical is not absent in this framework but is recontextualized as an inherent aspect of engaged existence. It is not about following abstract rules or principles but about cultivating patterns of engagement that are responsive to the needs and possibilities of the situation, including the needs and possibilities of others. It involves recognizing that our actions have consequences that extend beyond ourselves, and that we are responsible for the kind of world we create through our engagements. Ethical deliberation, then, becomes a matter of understanding and transforming the concrete patterns of engagement that structure a particular situation, taking into account the complex interplay of meaning-density, remnancy, and the Aging Matrix. It is about recognizing how our own being is intertwined with the being of others, and how our choices shape not only our own lives but also the lives of those around us, all within the shared horizon of the Aging Matrix. The ethical imperative, then, is to

cultivate patterns of engagement that promote flourishing, both for ourselves and for others, within the context of our shared finitude.

Section 9: Conclusion

The framework of the transliminal being, with its fundamental structure of elastic ekstastic multidimensionality, and the concept of the Aging Matrix with its reflexive impermanence, offer a radical rethinking of human existence and its relation to Being. By shifting the focus from a pre-existing subject to the primacy of engagement, we open up new avenues for understanding how meaning, value, and temporality emerge in human experience. We have moved beyond the traditional subject-object dichotomy, offering a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of the human condition, one that is deeply intertwined with temporality, history, and sociality.

This approach not only challenges traditional philosophical assumptions but also provides a powerful lens for analyzing a wide range of phenomena, from everyday experiences like reading and loving to fundamental existential concerns like anxiety and the search for meaning. It allows us to see how these experiences are not simply subjective states but manifestations of underlying structures of engagement that precede and make possible the very distinction between subject and object. The transliminal being is not a thing, nor a subject, nor even a process, but a dynamic field of engaged activity, a field that is constantly being shaped and reshaped through its ongoing involvement with the world.

Moreover, this framework contributes significantly to contemporary debates across various fields. In phenomenology, it extends and deepens discussions about embodiment, pre-reflective experience, and the nature of perception, challenging both internalist and externalist interpretations. In psychology, it offers a new perspective on cognition, emotion, and mental health, moving beyond the limitations of both biological and social models. In existential studies, it provides a novel way of understanding authenticity and self-realization, one that emphasizes the importance of patterns of engagement rather than the discovery of a pre-existing self. And in ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics, it challenges traditional notions of substance, permanence, and value, pointing towards a more dynamic and process-oriented understanding of being, one that is deeply intertwined with temporality and finitude.

Meaning-Density as the Engine of Temporal Experience and Ethical Life:

Furthermore, the concept of meaning-density, integrated into this framework, provides the crucial link between engagement and the lived

experience of temporality. It is through the varying densities of meaning, as they gather and disperse within the field of engagement, that the abstract structure of the Aging Matrix is translated into the concrete texture of our lives. Meaning-density is the engine that drives our experience of time, making it move quickly or slowly, intensely or dully, meaningfully or meaninglessly. It is the mechanism through which the "indefinitely definite end" exerts its influence on our present experience, shaping our desires, our values, and our sense of self.

The concept of meaning-density also provides a crucial link between engagement and the ethical dimension of human existence. Different patterns of meaning-gathering create different possibilities for ethical action and ethical relationships. By becoming aware of how meaning gathers in our own lives and in the lives of others, we can begin to cultivate patterns of engagement that are more conducive to ethical action and to creating a more just and compassionate world.

Future research should explore how different patterns of meaning-gathering create different temporal experiences, and how these patterns are shaped by individual, social, and historical factors. It should also investigate how we might cultivate patterns of engagement that lead to more fulfilling and meaningful temporal experiences. This involves understanding how we can become more aware of the ways in which meaning gathers in our lives, and how we can actively shape these patterns to create a richer and more satisfying experience of time.

The genealogical aspect of our analysis further strengthens this approach by revealing how the structures we have identified are not timeless or universal but have emerged historically. This opens up the possibility of understanding how different historical and cultural contexts might shape the fundamental structures of engagement, leading to different ways of being-in-the-world. Further research in this direction could explore how the Aging Matrix, for instance, manifests differently in different cultural contexts or historical periods, as well as how it is shaped by power relations, social institutions, and technological advancements. This genealogical perspective also allows us to critically examine the ways in which our current patterns of engagement might be limiting or oppressive, and to envision possibilities for transforming them in more liberating and fulfilling ways. It allows us to understand how our current structures of engagement are not inevitable but are the product of specific historical forces, and how they can be changed through conscious effort and social transformation.

Methodological Implications and Future Research:

By integrating phenomenological and genealogical methods, we have developed a powerful tool for investigating the fundamental structures of human existence. This approach not only addresses limitations in existing theories but also opens up new possibilities for philosophical inquiry, offering a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of what it means to be human. The transliminal being, as the locus of fundamental engagement, provides a new starting point for philosophy, one that moves beyond the subject-object dichotomy and embraces the rich complexity of our temporal, embodied, and engaged existence. The task for future research will be to further explore the implications of this framework for various domains of human experience and to continue developing the methodological tools needed to analyze the dynamic interplay of engagement, meaning, and Being in all its multifaceted manifestations. This will involve not only refining the concepts introduced here but also engaging in ongoing dialogue with other philosophical traditions and scientific disciplines, including cognitive science, anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

Future Research Directions:

1. **Empirical Investigations:** Applying the phenomenological-genealogical method, particularly the analysis of meaning-density, to a wider range of phenomena. This could involve:
 - o **Specific Psychological States:** Investigating how meaning-density shapes experiences of depression, addiction, trauma, and other psychological states. For instance, how does meaning gather differently in depression, and how does this affect the experience of time? How do traumatic experiences alter the structure of engagement and the flow of meaning-density?
 - o **Social Interactions:** Analyzing how power dynamics, social rituals, and interpersonal relationships are structured by patterns of engagement and meaning-gathering. How does meaning-density contribute to the formation of social bonds and the experience of social inclusion or exclusion? How do social structures shape the possibilities for meaningful engagement?
 - o **Cultural Practices:** Examining how artistic creation, religious practices, and other cultural forms both reflect and shape the fundamental structures of engagement. How do different cultural practices create different patterns of meaning-density, and how do these patterns shape the experience of time, value, and meaning?
2. **Cross-Cultural Studies:** Examining how the Aging Matrix, meaning-density, and the characteristics of the transliminal being manifest in different cultural contexts, exploring the similarities and differences in how different cultures understand and experience time, finitude, and meaning. This could involve comparative studies of different cultural narratives about death and the afterlife, different rituals

surrounding aging and dying, and different forms of social organization.

3. **Technological Implications:** Investigating how new technologies, particularly digital media and artificial intelligence, are reshaping patterns of engagement and meaning-density, and how this is impacting our experience of temporality, selfhood, and sociality. This could involve analyzing the impact of social media on attention spans, the role of virtual reality in shaping our experience of space and time, and the potential for AI to alter our fundamental patterns of engagement. How does the constant influx of information and the rapid pace of technological change affect the way meaning gathers in our lives? How do digital environments shape our experience of the Aging Matrix?
4. **Neuroscientific Connections:** Exploring potential connections between the concepts developed here (transliminal being, meaning-density, Aging Matrix) and findings in neuroscience, particularly in areas like embodied cognition, predictive processing, and the neuroscience of emotion and temporality. This could involve investigating the neural correlates of different patterns of meaning-gathering and exploring how the brain's predictive mechanisms are shaped by the Aging Matrix. Can neuroscience provide evidence for the different types of meaning-density, and can it help us understand how these patterns are instantiated in the brain?
5. **Therapeutic Applications:** Developing therapeutic approaches based on this framework, focusing on helping individuals identify and transform their fundamental patterns of engagement, cultivate more balanced meaning-density, and navigate the challenges of the Aging Matrix in more fulfilling ways. This could involve developing new techniques for working with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other psychological difficulties, based on an understanding of how these conditions are rooted in distorted or disrupted patterns of engagement. How can therapists help individuals to become more aware of their patterns of engagement and to cultivate more meaningful and fulfilling ways of being in the world?
6. **Detailed Case Studies:** Conducting in-depth case studies using the refined methodology to analyze various phenomena, demonstrating the practical applicability of the framework in diverse areas of human experience. This could involve qualitative interviews, textual analysis, or other methods to trace the interplay of engagement, meaning-density, and temporality in real-life situations. For example, analyzing how meaning-density shifts during major life transitions, how it is manipulated in political propaganda, or how it contributes to the experience of burnout in the modern workplace. These case studies would provide concrete examples of how the framework can be

applied to specific phenomena, further demonstrating its explanatory power.

The Ethical Imperative of Engagement:

Finally, this framework offers a new perspective on the ethical imperative that underlies human existence. If we are fundamentally engaged beings, then our primary ethical responsibility is not to adhere to abstract principles or to maximize utility, but to *cultivate patterns of engagement* that are conducive to human flourishing and that respect the inherent interconnectedness of all beings within the Aging Matrix. This involves:

1. **Recognizing and Reshaping Limiting Patterns:** Identifying and transforming patterns of engagement that are restrictive, oppressive, or destructive, both at the individual and social levels. This might involve addressing issues such as trauma, social injustice, and environmental degradation, all of which can be understood as manifestations of distorted or impoverished patterns of engagement. It requires us to become aware of how our own patterns of engagement might be contributing to these problems and to actively work towards creating more equitable and sustainable patterns. This also involves recognizing how power operates through the shaping of engagement and working to dismantle structures that limit the possibilities for meaningful engagement for certain groups of people.
2. **Cultivating Meaningful Engagement:** Actively fostering patterns of engagement that are rich in meaning, that allow for a balanced and dynamic flow of meaning-density, and that contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others. This involves cultivating practices that enhance our capacity for elasticity, ekstaticity, and multidimensionality, allowing us to engage with the world in more creative, compassionate, and fulfilling ways. It means seeking out experiences and relationships that nourish us and help us to grow, and contributing to the creation of social structures that support meaningful engagement for all. This might involve practices like mindfulness, meditation, or other forms of contemplative practice, which can help us to become more aware of the flow of meaning in our lives and to cultivate a more balanced and intentional relationship with our own experience.
3. **Embracing the Aging Matrix:** Accepting and embracing the fundamental temporal structure of our existence, recognizing that impermanence is not something to be feared or denied but is the very condition of possibility for meaning and value. This involves cultivating an awareness of our own finitude and the finitude of all beings, and allowing this awareness to inform our choices and actions. It means living in a way that acknowledges the preciousness of each moment and the importance of making the most of the time

we have. This also involves recognizing that our own finitude is intertwined with the finitude of others, and that our actions have consequences that extend beyond our own individual lifespan.

This ethical imperative is not a set of rules to be followed but a call to *engage more fully and responsibly with the world*. It is a call to become more aware of the patterns of engagement that shape our lives, to transform those patterns that are limiting or destructive, and to cultivate those that are conducive to human flourishing and to the well-being of the planet. It is a call to embrace the challenges and possibilities of our finite existence, and to create a more meaningful and just world for ourselves and for future generations. It is about recognizing that our ethical obligations arise not from abstract principles but from the concrete reality of our engaged existence within the Aging Matrix.

In closing, the exploration of the transliminal being, meaning-density, and the Aging Matrix provides a powerful new framework for understanding the human condition. It challenges us to move beyond outdated philosophical paradigms and to embrace a more dynamic, nuanced, and engaged understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. It is an invitation to a deeper and more meaningful engagement with the world, an engagement that recognizes the profound interconnectedness of being, time, and meaning in the ongoing adventure of human existence. This framework is not just a theoretical exercise but a call to action, a call to transform our patterns of engagement and to create a more meaningful and fulfilling future for all. It is a call to recognize that our lives are not simply our own, but are intertwined with the lives of others, and that our actions have consequences that extend far beyond ourselves, both in space and in time. It is a call to embrace the challenge and the beauty of being a transliminal being, a being that is always already engaged in the ongoing process of creating and transforming the world, a world that is made meaningful through that very engagement itself, a world where subject and object emerge from a more fundamental unity, a unity that is always already structured by the temporal horizon of the Aging Matrix. This is the task that lies before us, a task that is both daunting and exhilarating, a task that calls for our full participation and our deepest commitment. It is a task that requires us to rethink everything we thought we knew about ourselves and the world around us, and to embrace the radical possibilities that emerge when we recognize the primacy of engagement and the profound implications of our existence within the Aging Matrix. By understanding how meaning gathers and how it shapes our experience, we can begin to navigate our lives with greater awareness, intention, and compassion, creating a future where meaning flourishes within the shared horizon of our finite existence, a future where we are more fully and responsibly engaged with the world and with each other.

